

Forum on Transportation Investment
June 28, 2005

Morning Discussion

Jim Kempton: If we look at the top five listing, all are dependent on funding and sustainability. For instance, public transit, which is not currently funded by the state and/or minimally by local jurisdictions, will require additional funds to become a viable mode of transportation. Do any of us think that public transit can grow without more funding support?

Tom Dale: Public Transit is a key part of multi-modal concepts and factors into congestion relief. If you combine these themes together public transit ranks second behind safety.

Kathleen Lacey: The coordination of land use also relates to public transit issues. Public transit relies on density and planned housing that allows easy access to transit systems. Multi-modality is a state and/or regional issue and funding should be coming from these sources. The Idaho Transportation Planners position should be elevated to a higher staff level with more authority for project development.

Tom Dale: At the AIC conference two week ago, we agreed to a Task Force to put together legislation of local option authority for public transit funding. We feel it is a critical piece to establish a funding source for public transit. We also feel that counties and cities will need to join together for viable transit systems.

Ron Binggeli: Local option tax is not the only solution; we really need consistent state funding. A single funding source is not the best option for long-term public transit system.

Scott Burpee: We need to look 30 years down the road and build funding flexibility. Oklahoma uses a percentage of their toll road revenues for public transit. We need more tools in our system; we will need to recommend many options. The advantage to toll roads is that it taxes the people who use it and catches all – tourist, trucks, etc.

Jim Kempton: At our recent energy conference, we were told that very soon hybrid cars will be getting 100 miles per gallon. We cannot continue to base transportation funding on fuel taxes. Additionally, the cost of making roads is rising.

Bruce Sweeney: How can we increase the use of public transit?

Tom Dale: Our current public transit system is not elaborate. We have had to readjust and scale back because of lack of funding. Our peak service was in the 1970s during the oil crisis. The Treasure Valley rail corridor does not interconnect with the downtown business center, so we will have to seek additional ways to move people to the core business areas. User fees (40% to 12%) do not generate enough funds to meet this type of needs. Urban areas must develop a system that is complete, consistent, and frequent; while rural areas need to modify human behavior with maybe financial incentives, company tax breaks, and tapping into Medicaid transportation. Currently transit can't compete with the private car, but with gas prices rising, the demand for transit will increase and we need to be ready to meet the demand.

Charles Trainor: Land use planning will need to develop communities that are designed for efficient transit use. We will need completed street with sidewalks and bike paths.

Ron Binggeli: Our current system is limited. The Federal Transit Administration is recognizing more types of services-handicapped/others were recently mandated.

Cecil Ingram: I would like Larry Falkner, ITD's Public Transportation Administrator, to speak about ITD's Interagency working group.

Larry Falkner: Our Interagency Working Group is working to increase client transportation. Transportation for state agency clients amounts to over \$1 million per year. An ITD contract has been signed to track usage and bill the agencies. The University of New Mexico has developed software tracks usage and generates reimbursement billings. The software also tracks performance and savings. In northern Idaho school buses are going to start moving Medicaid clients and may deliver groceries. If you want further information check the July 12th minutes on the ITD website.

Jim Kempton: Well it certainly looks like public transit is going to have a big effect/impact on transportation funding needs.

Charles Hummel: I have information from Idaho Smart Growth, called Transit Funding 101 that explains funding sources, usages, and public transit agencies. (Copies were made and distributed to the attending members.) I would like to make two points. We are going to have to accept increased congestion especially in rural areas if public transit isn't developed; and additional roads/lanes doesn't necessarily mean less congestion.

Tom Dale: If we want an effective transit system; we must plan and do it now. Transit lanes on highways, transit system development, and land-use planning must all work together. We must significantly add funding for public transit.

Trent Clark: I expect an exponential change from usage of fossil fuel to bio-fuels. Use of bio-fuels will triple in the future. Quantum steps will be made every 3 years. Ethanol can be 70% new energy. Making ethanol has increased 160% efficiency and \$2 gas will make ethanol more affordable.

Darrel Manning: Do we support taking tax breaks away?

Trent Clark: To abandon subsidies will take changes.

Scott Burpee: Washington is now processing wood alcohol out of the small pieces of lumber industry. Now economically viable to grow trees and replant every 5 years.

Steve Ahrens: A \$22 billion estimate is large, but what amount have we had in past? \$3 billion over last 8 years.